After a summer filled with training, Charlotte Catholic’s cross country team started their fall season with a success. Both the women’s and men’s team finished second overall at the first annual Hare and Hounds meet at McAlpine Park. This year’s team, captained by seniors Matt Martin and Jamie Vezolles, appears to be following in the footsteps of last year’s team, who finished 6th for men and 3rd for women in North Carolina.

Sophomore Andrew Roberts, who finished first at the Hare and Hounds meet, just began his second year of competitive running. “Cross country is judged incorrectly,” said Roberts. “Few other athletes at Catholic could do what we do.”

Roberts refers to running the intense daily training routines led by coach Chris Causebrook. Usually held at McMullen Creek Greenway, the men’s practice begins with a mile-long warm-up. The varsity team, while completing a variety of different workouts including time trials and hills, runs about 5 to 8 miles every day.

“It isn’t a joke either,” said Roberts, speaking about a rigorous workout around a hill loop at Mile 2, “not with Causebrook on your heels.” “We don’t just run hills, we run five miles of hills.”

The women’s practices, led by coach Shea, are challenging as well, but slightly less exhausting. A normal practice, as sophomore Margot Corcoran explained, consists of a one mile warm-up followed by a five mile tempo run. “It’s an easy pace,” said Corcoran, “and we all run as a group.” Occasionally, however, the team will run several individual timed miles, which, according to senior Jamie Vezolles, are substantially more difficult.

In contrast, the atmosphere during meets is more laid back. “There’s a lot of adrenaline,” said junior Matt Phillips, “but meets are fun and rewarding afterwards.” Cross country runners complete a 5K, about 3.1 miles, at weekly meets usually held on Saturday mornings. The placements of the top five runners on a team are added together, and the team with the least points wins the meet.

Cross country, while boasting rigorous workouts, proves to be a very social sport. For many athletes, running cross country is party of a year-round ordeal including winter track, spring track and summer workouts. “I get to know a lot of people from other grades,” said Corcoran. “We talk the whole time.” “Most of my good friends are people I run with,” said Jamie Vezolles.

Vezolles, whose personal time is one of the best at Catholic, is looking forward to state meets this winter. According to her, the top ten individual runners and the top three teams qualify for the next round, regionals.